

Talking Points 'Faith: The Intersection of Action and Belief' Delivered 12 27 20
Isaiah 61:10-62:3; Psalm 148; Galatians 4:4-7; **Luke 2:22-40 (Sermon)**

We have traveled with our holy family during our Advent season and into the birth of Christ.

We continue to travel with our holy family, Mary, Joseph and Jesus, now entering Jerusalem so that Jesus would be a part of the ritual as written in the law "Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord".

How obedient to their religious leaders, customs and God's law Mary and Joseph are!

To faithful people, God's Law matters.

God's Word matters.

God sent Jesus for the redemption of those who were under the law.

"When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons" (Gal. 4:4-5).

The law is important, but only God's son will provide full redemption.

The law can only go so far, even for those who are devout.

Even though they have each had an angelic visitation and been assured of the 'specialness' of the new child, his 'otherness', his holiness, Mary and Joseph still followed the law so that he be designated as holy to the Lord in the ritual of their people.

They have prepared for this moment, bringing the proper sacrifice according to what was stated in the law "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

They had counted down to the precise time as indicated in the law for purification

And in carrying out this act of faithful obedience, Mary and Joseph, the faithful earthly couple called by God to usher God's only son into the world, will stand face to face with two other people who also embody faithfulness.

Notice what the Scriptures are saying: God sent forth his Son. He came to us. He is the gift from heaven. He was born of woman. He really became one with us. He became flesh for us. He took our flesh, when He could have chosen another way.

God became a man in Jesus. He took his stand with us, as us, so that he could act take action for us.

This is the message that is at the heart of the of the holy act we call 'incarnation'.

God, He came *one* of us, to do for *all* of us what *none* of us could do for ourselves.

Jesus was born under the law. He entered a life in which he was placed under his own commands.

That should strike at us in this age, as we have leaders all over the world who will persistently act as though they are above the laws of their people.

Not so Jesus. Not so God.

He fulfilled the law as one of us and then he laid down the only perfect human life that has ever been lived as a sacrifice for the sins of all who would receive him.

He paid the price for a debt He didn't owe, because we owed a debt we couldn't pay.

The coming of Jesus shows that God is love.

It shows us that God is righteous. It shows us that in the final reckoning in the world where we inhabit seems as though there is not justice, God says there is justice, and that the One who upholds it is God.

It points to the fact that God who promised to judge the world in righteousness and love, will do just that. He gave His only Son to prove it

Shows that God Himself, as Micah encouraged us to do, does justice, and he loves mercy, and this is how he holds the two together:

He is born under the law, and he does for us what none of us could do for ourselves. He lives the life that fulfills all that God requires, and then he lays it

down as a sacrifice for all who will receive him. God is just and he is the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (Rom. 3:26).

The Spirit moves in such a way that the lives of the little family will be connected to the Spirit's answering of the prayers of two individuals.

The two, in and of themselves, were such that most people would have passed them by.

They would have been overlooked by the mighty and powerful and the rich of their day, simply because they were not mighty, or powerful or rich.

Content to serve God and be relegated to prayer and praising God, they appear to have no real visible influence in secular world.

Indeed if you were not very devout yourself, going to the Temple to pray and worship, you may not have noticed them either.

It is often assumed that Simeon was an old man, but the text never says that of Simeon. The reason we assume him to be old is that when he holds Jesus in his arms, he says to God, "Now you are letting your servant depart in peace." He may have been old, but not necessarily so.

As we know full well. Tomorrow is not promised to us no matter what our age so we cannot necessarily presume that just because Simeon said he was now able to depart this life in peace doesn't mean that he is advanced in age.

Of Simeon we don't know his profession, his age, or so much about him.

What we do know is what the scripture thought was important to mention.

He is a devout and righteous man in Jerusalem (Luke 2:25)

That speaks well to/of his relationships with other people.

He was probably a man of his word. He did what was right. His 'yes' was yes, and his 'no' was no. He could be trusted in business; you could count on him as a friend. He was a man of character and of integrity.

He is devout. This speaks to his relationship with God. He loved God. He worshipped God. He served God. He prayed to God. God carried weight in his mind and in his heart.

And of Simeon we are told, that he waited for the consolation of Israel. Simeon was a man who had hope in the God he served. He was waiting and continually looking for the Promised One, the great Consolation or Comfort of Israel.

And that his life, and that of the family with the miraculous conception, intersect.

Of Simeon we are told he is a just, righteous and devout man of Jerusalem, who had eagerly awaited the consolation of Israel and the reconciliation that can be found only in the coming Messiah.

And the scripture says very simply “and the Holy Spirit rested on him.” (Luke 2:25)

Simeon resting in the security of the Spirit led life that God offers. Literally

What a great and wonderful statement that is.

In some way the presence of Almighty God himself rested on this man.

When people were with him, they probably felt that presence.

Because there is something about a person who walks so closely with God.

For the little that we know of Simeon, much is said.

May that the bio that the Lord reveals of each of us.

The Holy Spirit is at work in Simeon.

The Holy Spirit was upon him but at work within Simeon

“ And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple... (Luke 2:25-27)

The Spirit draws us to Jesus.

God lined up events in such a way as this man would arrive at the temple on the same day and time as Mary and Joseph would arrive with Jesus.

And here in the middle of the Temple, this center of religion and Jewish life, this center of laws and customs suddenly Jesus the deliverer of the Law is brought forth.

What is absent in this moment is how oblivious the priests and directors of the laws are to the presence of Christ.

If the Spirit had rested on them like with Simeon, you would think that the Baby of Mary, the Promised One would have been surrounded by others proclaiming this moment.

No one notices that the child in the arms of the young girl is the Son of God.

But praise be to God that a devout man of God with the Spirit of God upon him sees, knows, and responds.

“It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ” (2:26). And then Simeon prompted by the Holy Spirit knows *This is the One!*

This is indeed the great work of the Holy Spirit then and now.

The Spirit of God brings people to the One who can redeem them.

The Spirit of God brings people to the One who can deliver them.

The Spirit of God brings people to the realization of the promises that God makes that He is keeping.

The Spirit of God moves in us to notice the Living God.

Now, an ordinary man, extraordinary only in his devotion to his God, holds the Son of God in his arms

Imagine the moment how his heart must have leapt at knowing!

And he proclaims praises to God “Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word;”

His devotion In a paraphrase *I have lived with you in the past and now you have given me a glimpse of the one you have sent for the future of all.*

God, this little one is yours, but you have sent him as a gift to us, for us.

Praise be to God.

God keeps His promises even when He has to put it on the line to do so.

SO what does this say to us today?

What is the message?

It is this simple message

There is an intersection of Action and Belief.

The intersection to the road is called *Faith*.

Imagine if Simeon had not responded to the movement of the Holy Spirit that day?

He would have missed the great blessing that brought him enough peace for him to utter 'Master, you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word.'

The revelation the Holy Spirit, brought much peace to Simeon.

His belief that he had expressed in his devotion and his service to God would have been for nothing if he had not listened to the Spirit and acted by doing what the Spirit said do.

Faith, simply put is belief in action.

If we declare that we love the Lord our God, we have to put enough time into knowing Him that we recognize His Spirit when He says act.

The intersection of believe and acting on belief is Faith.

Beloved of God, have you devoted enough time to prayer and really abiding in God that you would recognize His Spirit when He says "act now"

God is a keeper of His word.

If we don't know God intimately, we can be missing out on the blessings that will give us the peace we long for.

We will tarry for a little longer on this Luke passage in our preparation for Epiphany Sunday, to take a look at Anna.

I hope you will join us.

Beloved of God, I leave you with these words: Be a man or woman of faith.

Amen.

Challenge:

Our Challenge this week is to continue to reach out to God.

Surrender all to Jesus.

Devote enough time to prayer and really abiding in God that you would recognize His Spirit when He says “act now”.

Each of us should strive to have a bio written like Simeon.

Not of earthly accomplishments, although those are important, and many of them are God ordained.

But our primary accomplishment should be to be so close to the God we serve that we recognize the presence of His Spirit.

We should all strive to live our lives in such a way that it is said of us what was said of Simeon...”The Spirit was upon him.”

AMEN.

Our Benediction

Go forth to love and serve God in all that you do. In God’s strength, comfort the afflicted, stand with those who weep, and defend the oppressed. And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit abide with you, now and always, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Go in *peace*, knowing you’re God’s beloved child!

If you found today’s worship service helpful to you please send us an e-mail at: yourmtparan@gmail.com

We would LOVE to hear from you!